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THREE SELF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

(Continued from September 2nd Bulletin)

Under Self-government, Bishop Robin Chen discusses Church Reorganization. He points out first that this reorganization is needed because of the great changes that have taken place since Liberation, and because the missionaries left behind various unsatisfactory situations that need to be changed. Here he notes the erratic church district boundaries, drawn more for the convenience of the missions than according to the logic of the situation, and the hap-hazard way in which churches have developed, sometimes several churches in a small town, and sometimes long stretches left without any church at all. This, he says, was not necessarily bad planning, but it does create a problem for the church today.

He describes one typical area, in which the churches of one denomination can be divided into four groups: First, those which were poorly organized under the missionaries, but have now corrected that situation and have a strong church life, able to help neighboring churches. Second, churches which also have a strong church life, but whose leaders are backward in their thinking; political study has not brought them up to date. Third, some churches where the leaders seem to be progressive, but they have a wrong attitude of possessiveness toward their churches, thinking of them as their private domain. And fourth are churches without any leadership whatever. Under these conditions, the purpose of reorganization must be to simplify the church machinery and make it more democratic.

Different churches are approaching the problem in different ways. Some churches begin with a reorganization of the top organ in their church organization, and then work down through each successively lower level, as for example the Lutheran and the Seventh Day Adventist churches. Some, after a reorganization at the top level, send representatives to each district of the church to assist in the reorganization on the lower levels. The Church of Christ in China, the Methodist Church (American) and the Episcopal Church have followed this pattern. Some however have begun on the lower level, with the individual church or the regional organization, and worked up from that to the nation-wide organization, as for example the Little Flock. Some local churches have invited the assistance of the local Three Self organization in carrying through their reorganization.

Reorganization does not necessarily involve the dismissing of the older leaders and the appointment of younger, more progressive leaders in their place. In a church reorganization in Shanghai last year there was some feeling against several of the elders, but after thorough discussion they were all retained and several younger and more progressive elders were added to the list. The bishop also quotes from an article on the same subject by George Wu, to stress the point that all plans for reorganization should be carefully thought through.

T. C. CHAO ON THE RIGHTISTS

When Mao Tse-tung last February invited the hundred flowers to bloom, there was an unex-

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pected reaction of rightist criticism of Communism. Prof. Ko Pei-chi of the People's University in Peking, boldly assailed the Communist Party, saying, "If you act badly, the people can sweep you out. They can even kill you. And it will not be possible to classify this as unpatriotic, for the Communist Party does not serve the People. If the Communist Party should perish China will not perish." (Published in People's Daily, March 31.)

This was going too far, and since then all the apologists for the present regime have been busy refuting his statements. Dr. T. C. Chao had an article in the June 2 People's Daily entitled "Some Observations from the Heart", in which he severely condemns Ko's anti-Party statements and upholds the principles of Socialism, without however mentioning Marxist atheistic philosophy. He appeals to his own experience, saying, "In the Three-anti campaign I ate a great deal of bitterness, more than I can say. But I do not criticize the Party for that, for I realize that that was the best and most effective education for an old man set in his ways. At that time our country was still in a state of revolutionary transition, and it was necessary for the people to find out for certain whether one of the intelligentsia who had always associated with imperialist elements was really on the side of the people or on the side of the imperialists. This was not an easy thing to do, but the Communists with whom I came in contact generally took the attitude of a sympathetic physician. There were some who were prejudiced or over-enthusiastic, but in general their attitude was just and fair. And I know that many others had the same experience. If one should harbor resentment because of unjust attacks, that would be making a mountain out of a molehill, and would be a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of revolution. In dealing with counterrevolution there may have been unjustified attacks and unjustified killings, but taking it as a whole, the Chinese Communist Party truly loves and serves the people, and has shown a liberal and forgiving spirit."

This article by Dr. Chao was reproduced in the July 8 Tien Feng, and the editor adds a page and a half of his own comments, approving Dr. Chao's position.

(In speaking of eating a great deal of bitterness, Dr. Chao confirms the reports that were current in the West at the time of the Three-anti Movement, reports which he ridiculed in March 1956 without actually denying. See Bulletin for October 1, 1956.)

THE CHINESE CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION

Previous attempts by the Religious Affairs Bureau to organize the Catholics have evidently failed, and so a new start was made in July with the organization of The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Archbishop Ignatius Pi of Shenyang is the chairman of the new organization, and there are three bishops among the eight vice-chairmen. 241 Catholics from all over China were present at the meeting. One of the actions was to approve a letter of protest to the Vatican over its refusal to confirm the election of Francis Xavier Chang as Vicar Capitular of the Changhai Diocese. The resolution stated, "The Chinese Church must be in the hands of a Chinese clergy, independent in Administration."

The conference opened on July 15, at which time it was announced that it would continue for six days. But something must have disturbed that timetable, for on July 30 it was still in session, and possibly also on August 3. (One might surmise that it took them longer than they had anticipated to reach agreement on a satisfactory "patriotic" line.)

THE CHURCH IN KIAOTUNG

The churches of eastern Shantung, comprising the counties of Kiaochow, Kaomi, P'ingtu and Tsimo, (all inland from Tsingtao, between Tsingtao and Laichow) were visited by a team of church workers in November 1956 and February and March of this year. There were six Shantung pastors, including Episcopal Bishop Stephen Wang, and Tsai Wen-hao was added as a representative of the national Three-self Movement. They visited 25 country churches and 7 city churches in these four counties, representing six denominations: Church of Christ in China, Baptist (Chin-hsin-hui), Swedish Baptist, Lutheran, the Jesus Church (formerly the Jesus Family) and the Little Flock.

The area was evangelized early by missionaries going inland from Tsingtao and Chefoo. Before 1937 there were more than a hundred churches in these four counties, with over 10,000 members. But war conditions from 1937 to 1949, and the closing for Land Reform after that, have played havoc with these churches. "Some churches which formerly had many members, as P'uchen and Lengchiach'un in Kiaochow county, and Shakou in P'ingtu county, now have only a few members scattered in neighboring villages; many branch churches and preaching places have disappeared with no responsible person, and buildings either in ruins or diverted to other purposes. Some

Lu Hsin, Assemblies of God, and Jesus Family churches in the Hsien cities have just disappeared."

Mr. Tsai, who writes the report, gives four reasons for this debacle. 1. The civil war in 1946 and 1947 was fought over this territory, and the churches were thus not able to be rehabilitated after the effects of the preceding war years. 2. The churches here had never learned self-support. For example, the pastors of the Lutheran church and the Swedish Baptist Church were every one of them receiving more or less subsidy from abroad. Before 1937 the Lutherans had 25 pastors, all of whom quit during the Japanese War, and only seven returned after 1945. Thus many churches were left without leadership. 3. After Liberation the churches had to close temporarily for Land Reform, and at that time some of the pastors quit for financial or other reasons. After Land Reform was over, many churches did not reopen, some because there was no responsible person, some because the church members were afraid to reopen, some because of confused political conditions, and others because local officials did not understand the government policy on religion and would not allow them to reopen. 4. This area has had a long standing hostility toward the Christian Church. Many of the Boxers came from this region, and the punishment exacted after 1900 created a deep rift between Christians and non-Christians, traces of which still exist.

Conditions have now taken a turn for the better: "City churches are gradually getting more active, both the spirit and the financial support of the pastors are improving, and the number of worshippers increasing. For example, the Ch'engkuan Baptist Church in Kiaochow has outgrown the small building in which they were worshipping, and so the government has given back the big Church; the Tungkuan Baptist Church in Kaomi reopened in March and now has 150 worshippers every Sunday, with a prayer meeting in the church every night. Recently they held a three day spiritual retreat. Of rural churches 24 are now open, and some 10 or 15 more are preparing to reopen. The others do not have enough members left to warrant reopening."

The visiting team got in touch with local officials in every county, and report that now at last the latter are thoroughly committed to carrying out the religious policy of the government. The difficulties now are within the church itself. The church lacks pastors; only one of all the rural churches has a regular pastor. There is also the problem of reconciling worship with their work schedules.

THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

This indigenous Chinese denomination celebrated the fortieth anniversary of its founding with a number of special meetings in June of this year. In Wuhan more than 1,500 gathered together for a meeting in a large government hall; in Nanking there was a smaller meeting of about 200. No exact statistics for the church are given, but it is stated that they now have more than 1,000 congregations with more than 100,000 members. In Nanking they have four churches with a total membership of 481. The church has now spread outside of China, where they have congregations in Japan, Indonesia, Malaya, North Borneo, Honolulu, India, Korea, and Thailand.

A Chinese friend has characterized the membership of the two main indigenous denominations as follows: that whereas the Little Flock membership tends toward middle class business people, the membership of the True Jesus Church tends toward lower class working people.

FURTHER LITTLE FLOCK ARRESTS

On April 20 Lu Hsin-lin and Tung Chin-ching, leaders of the Little Flock congregations in Yuch'uan and Shanglu respectively, both in Yungk'ang county, Chekiang, were arrested, and the charges against them are given in an article in the May 27 Tien Feng. These seem to be concerned chiefly with Lu Hsin-lin. He is charged with having prophesied the immediate coming of the Lord, at which time the Nationalist Party would return to power, and then all the boys wearing the red neckerchief of the Communist Youth organization would be put to death. As a result many parents would not allow their sons to wear the neckerchief. He quoted Jeremiah 34:15 in claiming that the religious liberty promised by the Communist government was a false one, and Psalms 102:20 in prophesying imprisonment for Christians. He quoted Song of Solomon 4:16 and interpreted the north wind as the Communists and the gentle fragrant south wind as the Nationalists. The flowing backward of the Jordan River in Ps. 114:5 is a prophecy of the return of the Nationalists to power. The Communist Party is the red dragon of Revelation 12.

His followers called themselves "spiritual", and often acted very violently toward others. One woman left home last September to go out distributing pamphlets and preaching; she came home briefly at the New Year season, and then went away again and has not come back. One man has used Lu's method of bible interpretation, and finds the description of Joshua in Zechariah to be a